

OKANAGAN LAKE KOKANEE

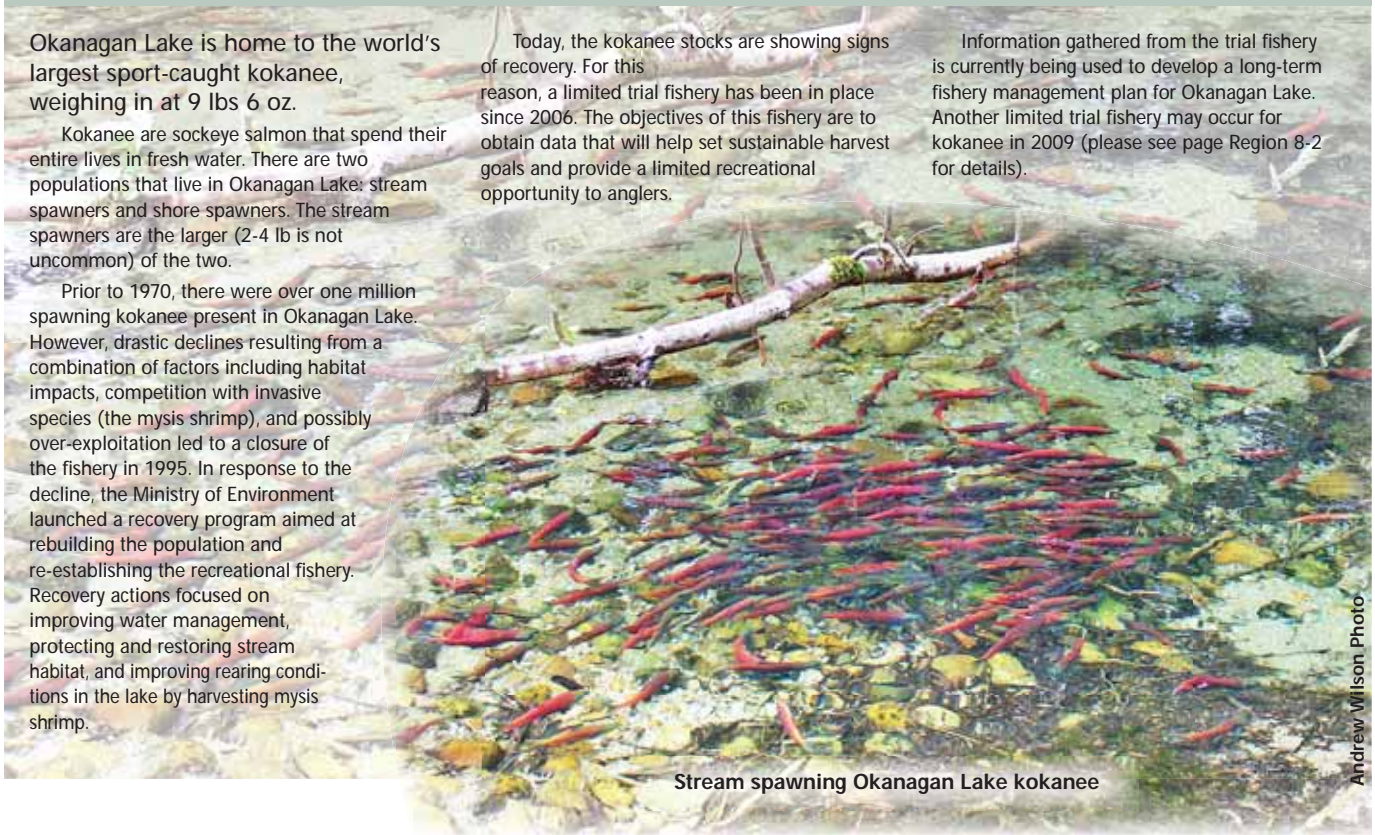
Okanagan Lake is home to the world's largest sport-caught kokanee, weighing in at 9 lbs 6 oz.

Kokanee are sockeye salmon that spend their entire lives in fresh water. There are two populations that live in Okanagan Lake: stream spawners and shore spawners. The stream spawners are the larger (2-4 lb is not uncommon) of the two.

Prior to 1970, there were over one million spawning kokanee present in Okanagan Lake. However, drastic declines resulting from a combination of factors including habitat impacts, competition with invasive species (the mysis shrimp), and possibly over-exploitation led to a closure of the fishery in 1995. In response to the decline, the Ministry of Environment launched a recovery program aimed at rebuilding the population and re-establishing the recreational fishery. Recovery actions focused on improving water management, protecting and restoring stream habitat, and improving rearing conditions in the lake by harvesting mysis shrimp.

Today, the kokanee stocks are showing signs of recovery. For this reason, a limited trial fishery has been in place since 2006. The objectives of this fishery are to obtain data that will help set sustainable harvest goals and provide a limited recreational opportunity to anglers.

Information gathered from the trial fishery is currently being used to develop a long-term fishery management plan for Okanagan Lake. Another limited trial fishery may occur for kokanee in 2009 (please see page Region 8-2 for details).



Stream spawning Okanagan Lake kokanee

Andrew Wilson Photo